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Statement submitted by Population Institute, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

According to the 2014 Millennium Development Goals report, progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals include improving access to drinking water and sanitation, reducing extreme poverty (defined as living on less than $1.25 per day) by half, and reducing child mortality by almost half between 1990 and 2010.

The sustainable development goals reflect the recognition that our societies can only progress if we take a multi-dimensional approach to development. Because climate change, energy, food, water, the environment and living standards are all interconnected, efforts to address one challenge often exacerbate other global challenges. We cannot solve these problems in isolation. Sustainable development, therefore, requires a proper balance between our economic activities and our ecological surroundings. It also requires investments in women's education and family planning programs to ensure that every child is wanted and has a fair opportunity to succeed.

Governments will need to manage their use of natural resources in a transparent and accountable manner to successfully transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals. Each country has a quantifiable supply of renewable resources (such as fresh water, arable land and forests) and non-renewable resources (such as fossil fuels, metals and minerals) within its sovereign territory. A country's demands for renewable and non-renewable resources, whether they are obtained locally or acquired through international trade, can likewise be measured. The only way to determine whether a country has adequate natural resources to sustain its economy and achieve its development aspirations is to compile a balance sheet that compares its demands with the available supply of natural resources. If the ratio of demand to supply exceeds 1.0, the demand for resources is unsustainable.

Countries that conduct a periodic assessment of their natural resources and develop strategies for bringing their resource consumption into balance with the available supply will acquire a competitive edge in the global economy and pave the way for a better future. Development policies that are aimed at addressing resource depletion and restoring a healthy environment also protect inter-generational equity. As the 1987 Brundtland Commission report warned, we must meet "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

A growing population will make it increasingly difficult to achieve the balance between consumption and conservation. As demands for food, water and other basic necessities escalate, there is also an increased risk of economic and political stability. By educating and empowering women, and giving them access to family planning services, we can strengthen families, fight poverty, preserve the environment, and help achieve a world population that can live in harmony with the planet.